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CIA Showing Its Secrets in Bid to Polish Its Image

Criticism, New International Attitude Bring Disclosures; Lid Still on Vital Operations

BY MURRAY SEEGER

Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—One of the biggest of the bureaucratic icebergs in Washington, the Central Intelligence Agency, is riding a little higher in the water these days.

Under the heaviest internal and external attacks of its 27-year history, "the agency" or "the company"—as its employees and those who deal with the CIA call it—has initiated a subtle campaign to refurbish its political standing and generate new public support.

In this campaign the agency is disclosing more of itself to public view, while leaving what it considers to be vital dimensions well hidden beneath the surface of essential secrecy.

"If we don't protect the names of our people abroad and people who work with us, we won't have people who will work with us," William E. Colby, the career official who took over as CIA director last year in the midst of the agency's worst problems, said recently.

"If we can't protect some of our technical systems that give us information, then the other side can take countermeasures and we will no longer be able to benefit from those systems," he said.

The recent wave of criticism against the CIA, the keystone in an intelligence community that spends about \$8 billion a year, was stimulated by disclosures of its peripheral involvement in the Watergate scandals and its direct involvement in Chilean politics.

CIA officials are equally disturbed by the more recent phenomenon of employees leaving the tightly closed circle, where morale and loyalty, traditionally have been remarkably high, and selling their stories in books and magazine articles.

Although the officials say they are willing to accept informed criticism of the agency's performance and adjust their operations to changes in national policy, they are apprehensive about the possibly fatal effects of disclosures made by former agents.

"People can be killed," one CIA man said in referring to some of the recent insider tales of agency life. "These are people who put their faith in us."

The agency has strong authority to guard against secrets being dispensed by its current employees but the only restraint against former employees telling all is a contract they sign when they joined the CIA and the general laws against espionage.

The agency has been involved for months in an embarrassing suit directed at blocking publication of parts of the book, "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," by Victor Marchetti, a former agency official, and John D. Marks, who worked for the Department of State.

A more recent book, "Inside the Company: a CIA Diary," by former agent Philip Agee, has been published in Britain, where, of course, the agency cannot block the printing of anything it considers sensitive.

To counter such publications, the agency is supporting legislation that would make it a crime for former employees to disclose secret information.

Disclosures by former employees and other published information on the agency's activities have supplied ammunition for private individuals and congressmen who believe the CIA should give up its "dirty tricks."

"There is no justification in our legal, moral or religious principles for operations of a U.S. agency which result in assassinations, sabotage, political disruptions or other meddling in another country's internal affairs, all in the name of the American people," Sen. James G. Abourezk (D-S.D.) said.

"It amounts to nothing more than an arm of the U.S. government conducting a secret war without either the approval of Congress or the knowledge of the American people," he said.

The traditional rationale for such activity, that the Soviet Union works even harder to undermine and overturn legitimate governments, was given by President Ford at his Sept. 16 press conference when he was asked whether the CIA had an international right to interfere in the internal affairs of Chile.

"Our government, like other governments, does take certain actions in the intelligence field to help implement foreign policy and protect national security," Mr. Ford said. "I am informed reliably that Communist nations spend vastly more money than we do for the same kind of purposes."

He added: "I think this is in the best interest of the people in Chile, and certainly in our best interest."

Colby admits that the conflict between Western-style democracy and Communism has changed and that there is room for debate on the agency's future role.

"It is advocated by some that the United States abandon covert action," he said in a recent speech. "This is a legitimate question and in the light of current American policy . . . it would not have a major impact on our current activities or on the current security of the United States."

In recent history the CIA developed and sent an armed invasion against Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and armed a secret army in Laos in the Indochina

war. However, it is supporting few, if any, such operations now.

In Chile the agency had subsidized opposition parties and newspapers in an attempt to block the election of Salvadore Allende, a Marxist, to the presidency and later to prevent his crushing of all political opposition.

Although such operations apparently are sanctioned under the general public authorization issued by President Harry S. Truman when he established the CIA in 1947 from the remains of the wartime Office of Strategic Services, the agency has been given more recent, secret authority to carry on covert actions abroad.

More controversy than that generated by the overseas "dirty tricks" was stimulated by the disclosure that the CIA had helped one of its former "old boys," E. Howard Hunt Jr., in his clandestine White House assignments without knowing what they were.

Domestic use of CIA authority is clearly illegal. Although the agency wavered under the strong pressure of the Nixon White House, it finally fought back and saved its dented reputation.

"It was lower-level people who blew the whistle on Hunt," one agency member recalled. After giving the retired agent some equipment, the "lower-level" executives reported his requests to higher-ups, and Hunt was cut off from additional support.

On the international political scene, agency officials are examining the historic role of covert operations. They are convinced they must retain